



USDA Foods: Changing School Lunch and Supporting American Agriculture Nationwide

USDA Foods provides healthy foods to schools by:

Purchasing more than two billion pounds of food from American farmers each year.

Meeting strict food safety and nutrition standards and using 100% American grown foods.

Providing high quality meals to more than **30 million students** a day.

Adding versatility and being an economical way to provide our Nation's children with appealing meals.



Serving up Nutritious Options in Schools

USDA Foods include a wide variety of high quality vegetables, fruits, dairy products, whole grains, lean meats and other protein options. USDA Foods support the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the school meal pattern requirements to make it easier for schools to prepare healthy meals. In recent years, USDA has reformulated products in every food category to lower the levels of sodium, sugar, and fat and to help offer nutrient-dense, kid friendly meals.

VEGETABLES

- USDA offers fresh, frozen, canned, and dried options representing all 5 vegetable subgroups: dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy, and other.
- USDA only offers no salt added frozen vegetables and either low-sodium or no salt added canned vegetables and beans.

FRUITS

- USDA offers fresh, frozen, canned and dried options in sizes ranging from individual portion to bulk sizes for processing.
- Canned fruits are packed in extra light syrup with the option of sucrose only syrup.

WHOLE GRAINS

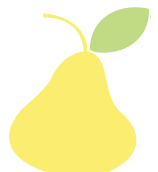
- All items shipped to schools meet the whole grain-rich criteria.
- Schools can order ready-to-serve items and whole grain products for scratch cooking or baking.

MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES

- USDA offers a variety of nutrient-dense protein options such as meat, fish, cheese, nuts and eggs.
- Specifications have been changed to lower the sodium and fat on many meat and cheese products.
- USDA continues to work with industry to make reductions to sodium while still achieving optimal product performance and acceptability.

Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The DoD Fresh program offers schools the option to get more fresh fruits and vegetables using their USDA Foods entitlement. Schools can request a wide range of produce items to be delivered by a DoD contractor. This program helps connect schools with high quality, domestic fresh fruits and vegetables and helps maximize the use of USDA Foods entitlement to support healthy menus.



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USDA Supports American Agriculture

USDA has a dual mission of providing healthy food and supporting American farmers. All products purchased are grown, processed, and packaged in the United States or its territories. USDA Foods are local to someone. The United States agricultural system supplies a variety of nutritious foods for schools such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meats, fish, eggs, nuts and dairy.

USDA Foods Are High Quality, Versatile and Economical

USDA Foods offers more than 50 agricultural products through a selection of more than 200 different items and pack sizes. Foods purchased must comply with stringent specifications and are processed under USDA grading and inspection services. Due to this diversity, USDA Foods offer school districts flexibility to order products in various package sizes or forms from fresh, canned, frozen and dried, to ready-to-serve and bulk sizes for processing.

USDA Foods offer products in basic forms that can be used in a variety of recipes or preparations. This helps schools adjust their menus to regional and cultural preferences, while also determining how to best meet the nutrition standards for the overall meal. As the needs of schools continue to change, USDA Foods will also adapt to accommodate these needs so all schools can take full advantage of USDA Foods to prepare healthy meals that students enjoy.

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In working to meet the updated school nutrition standards, I find the USDA Foods Program has worked hard to increase our choices and access to new food items. I am particularly glad to see more red/orange and dark green vegetables available through the USDA Foods Program. Schools should take full advantage of the products available through USDA Foods and also reach out to USDA as great sources for program support.

Doug Davis, SNS
Director of Burlington School Food Project

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Spread the word about the nutritional benefits of school meals and the healthy food available through the USDA Foods:

- Including messages about USDA foods in newsletters and Web sites, or on the back of lunch menus;
- Partner with local chefs to do food demonstrations using USDA Foods at school assemblies or other events;
- USDA has free and easy to use resources through Team Nutrition such as recipes, nutrition lessons, and posters for classrooms.
- Please visit: fns.usda.gov/fdd/food-distribution-programs for USDA Foods resources which help schools prepare healthy meals.

